

Database User Guide

Go Beyond Books

Our databases have some of the best online information on a wide variety of subjects. Whether you are looking for help creating your resume, or deciding which digital camera to buy, or writing an essay for school, these online resources will help you in your research.

What is a Database?

- Databases give you online access to a variety of published information sources, such as newspapers, magazines, and journals.
- You can read an entire article from Consumer Reports, for example, online.
- The publications and information are usually NOT available freely online.
- The library has already paid for the premium content in the databases, so as a library user, you get to use these for **free**.

Advantages Over Print

- **Quality:** databases offer content that is evaluated by publishers for authority and accuracy.
- **Timely:** journal, newspaper, and magazine articles are published far more frequently than books, so the information in a database is usually much more current!
- **Convenience:** access 24/7 from home
- **Availability:** the information is always available, so you can use databases when all the books on the subject are out.

Database vs. Internet

- Anyone can publish information on the internet, so you need to carefully evaluate the websites you find to determine the source of the site and the validity of its content.
- Information on databases has been evaluated by publishers and experts, so it's much more reliable.
- The information on a database is also stable, organized, and indexed for more accurate searches.

Online Searching Tips

Follow the following search tips and get better results:

- Use keywords or search terms that come directly from your research topic or homework question.
- Be specific. e.g. Use *St. Bernards* instead of *dogs*.
- If you don't get many search results, try a broader term.
- Try using words with the same or similar meaning. e.g. search using *tests, quizzes, examinations*.
- Try variations of the word e.g. *swim, swimming, swims*
- Use "and" to search for more than one keyword e.g. steroids **and** sports.
- Use quotation marks (") to combine keywords into phrases. e.g. "federal budget"
- Use "or" to search for results that contain either keyword. e.g. housing and Vancouver **or** Calgary
- Check the "help" or "about" feature provided by the search engines and databases.

Advanced Searching Tips

Databases often have more options for advanced searching. The tips below apply to most databases:

- Search for word variants with the use of a wildcard, such as an asterisk or question mark. e.g. a search for *swim** will search for the terms *swim, swims, swimmers & swimming*. Wildcards vary among databases so consult the "Help" or "About" feature.
- Most databases provide subject headings that are relevant to your search. These may be simply called "subject" or "suggested topics". Click on a subject heading to conduct a new search, or combine the subject heading with your original search to narrow the results.
- Limit your search by time period. e.g. search only articles published in the last 3 months, or choose a date range.

Wherever possible, limit your search by publication, scholarly journals or full text.